

Message Text

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64

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00

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SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-03 PA-01

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R 311803Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3397

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, UK

SUBJECT: LORD KEARTON TO HEAD BRITISH NATIONAL OIL
COMPANY

1. SUMMARY. ENERGY SECRETARY BENN ANNOUNCED JULY 29
THAT LORD KEARTON WILL BECOME THE FIRST CHAIRMAN OF
BNOC AND ALSO CHAIR THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE TO SET UP
THE CORPORATION. KEARTON, AGE 64, IS A RECENTLY
RETIRED INDUSTRIALIST WITH A REPUTATION FOR BUILDING
HIS TEXTILE FIRM INTO A MAJOR AND PROSPEROUS INTER-
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NATIONAL CORPORATION. HE IS A WELL REGARDED PUBLIC

FIGURE AND WHILE HE HAS NO EXTENSIVE OIL BACK GROUND, HE HAS CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE ON ATOMIC ENERGY AND ELECTRICAL GENERATING POLICY BOARDS. KEARTON IS WELL KNOWN TO EMBASSY AS AN ABLE OFFICIAL AND HIS APPOINTMENT SHOULD BE A POSITIVE FACTOR IN GETTING THE CONTROVERSIAL BNOC OFF TO A CONSTRUCTIVE START. END SUMMARY

2. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER FRANK KEARTON'S THREE-YEAR APPOINTMENT CAME AT THE END OF A NIGHT SESSION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH BNOC (THE PETROLEUM AND SUBMARINE PIPELINE BILL -- SEE LONDON 11062) WAS PASSED BY A 13-VOTE MAJORITY (290-277). BNOC WILL OFFICIALLY COME INTO BEING PROBABLY IN NOVEMBER WHEN PARLIAMENTARY ACTION IS COMPLETED. KEARTON'S APPOINTMENT MARKS THE INITIAL STAGE IN IMPLEMENTING BRITAIN'S FIRST STEPE OIL COMPANY. UNTIL BILL'S FINAL PASSAGE, KEARTON WILL FORM THE NUCLEUS OF THE 20-MEMBER BNOC BOARD. YET TO BE NAMED IS THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER WHO WILL WORK UNDER KEARTON.

3. KEARTON RETIRED FROM COURTAULDS, A MAJOR TEXTILE CORPORATION, LAST WEEK AFTER 11 YEARS AS CHAIRMAN AND WITH A CONSIDERABLE REPUTATION FOR TRANSFORMING THE COMPANY INTO A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL COMPETITOR ABLE TO PROSPER EVEN IN THE CYCLICAL DEPRESSIONS OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY. HE IS ALSO THE LONGEST SERVING PART-TIME MEMBER OF THE UK ATOMIC ENERGY AUTHORITY (SINCE 1955) AND A PART-TIME MEMBER OF THE CENTRAL ELECTRICITY GENERATING BOARD. HE WAS GIVEN LIFE PEERAGE IN 1970.

4. BIOGRAPHIC DATA: BORN FEBRUARY 17, 1911; GRADUATE OF OXFORD (ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE); BACKGROUND IN CHEMISTRY AND ENGINEERING; WORKED AT ATOMIC ENERGY PROJECTS IN UK AND US 1940-45. HE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH

MENT/INDUSTRY COMMITTEES AFB RECEIVED SEVERAL HONORARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEGREES. EXTENSIVE BIOGRAPHY FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.

5. REACTION TO DATE HAS BEEN FAVORABLE. AMERICAN OIL COMPANY OFFICIAL COMMENTED TO US THAT KEARTON'S APPOINTMENT WILL BE "AS GOOD AS COULD BE EXPECTED OUTSIDE OF

OILMAN." DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY OFFICIAL WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR BNOC AFFAIRS SAID APPOINTMENT OF

CHAIRMAN SHOULD MAKE FILLING REMAINING SENIOR POSTS
SOMEWHAT EASIER. MOST DIFFICULT POSITION TO FILL WILL
BE THAT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE WHO MUST COME FROM OIL
INDUSTRY. HE EXPECTS KEARTON TO BEGIN WORK VERY SHORTLY
TO ORGANIZE BNOC STAFF WHICH AT MOMENT CONSISTS OF ONE
SECONDED CIVIL SERVANT (J. D. EVANS, FORMERLY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY IN OFFSHORE SUPPLIES OFFICE).

RICHARDSON

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